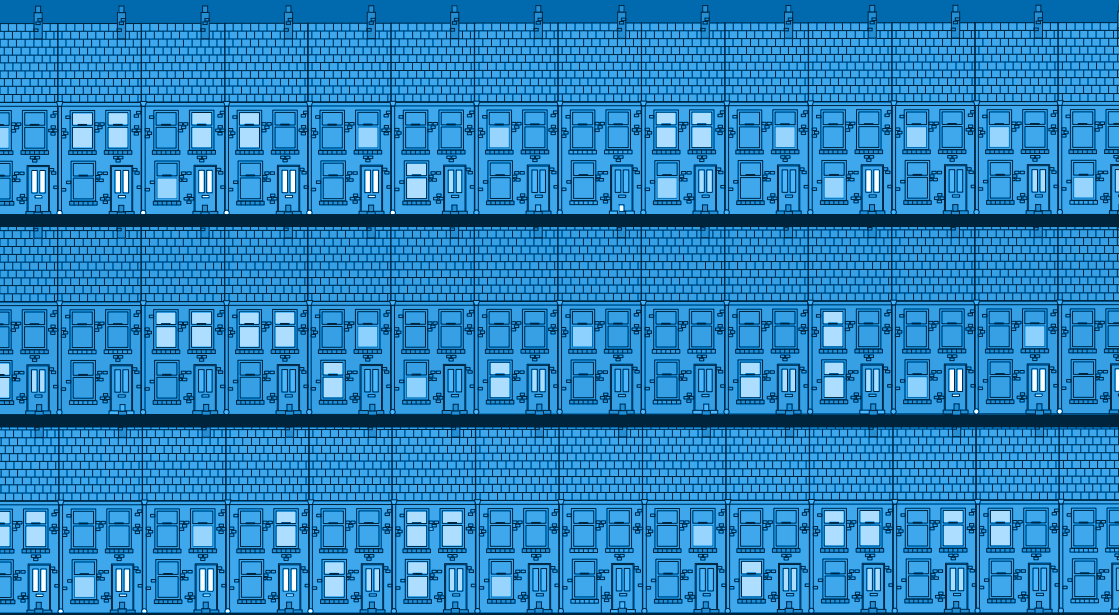
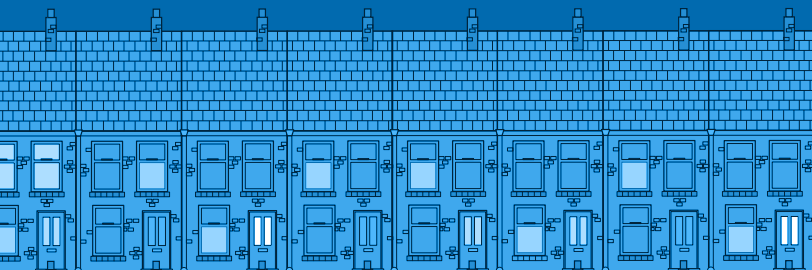


Our Key Policies in Northern Ireland





WHO WE ARE

Electrical Safety First is the consumer charity dedicated to preventing deaths, injuries and fires caused by electricity. Our aim is to ensure everyone can use electricity safely in their homes. We are recognised by government and industry as the leading campaigning charity and technical authority on home electrical safety. **We**

- lobby and advise the UK and devolved governments on improving policy on electrical safety.
- campaign on behalf of consumers and electrical trade professionals to improve safety regulation and ensure safety messages are appropriate, up-to-date and well communicated.
- work with tenants, landlords and homeowners to reduce deaths and accidents in the home.
- provide expert information and advice to help people protect themselves from unsafe counterfeit and sub-standard electrical goods.

PREVENTING FIRES AND PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

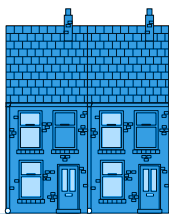
Last year, 62% of house fires were caused by electricity in Northern Ireland¹. We also know that between 2012-2017, there have been 20 deaths and 722 casualties caused by electrical fires in Northern Ireland homes². These numbers, however, are considered to be a significant underestimate. They do not, for example, take account of deaths from electric shock (i.e. electrocution) or other types of electrical injuries.

Given the significance of electrical house fires in Northern Ireland, we need a long-term government strategy to plan and target the most effective prevention measures. We currently rely on fire analysis which fails to identify current or emerging risks from sub-standard or fake chargers for products like mobile phones and e-cigarettes, as well as new technological products such as smart appliances and electric vehicles.

Older or vulnerable people can be most at risk of fire because they often live in old or poor quality housing with faulty electrics, own older appliances or are unable to afford essential electrical repairs. Set against a backdrop of an ageing population, with dementia and other degenerative syndromes heightening electrical risk, those in later life may find themselves asset rich but cash poor, with limited electrical safety grant funding available to mitigate dangers in the oldest housing stock.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ Creation of an All-Party Group in the Northern Ireland Assembly to provide a forum for MLAs and stakeholders to discuss a range of high risk electrical safety issues and propose policy solutions.
- ✓ A more up-to-date reporting system that allows for better capturing of incidents caused by modern technology.
- ✓ A review of the causes of fires by electrical sources and the cost to public services to allow targeted campaigns to be developed.
- ✓ Proactive action targeting the over 65s with safety checks to prevent electrical fires.



SAFER HOUSING

Over the last five years, Electrical Safety First has led the charge for a legal requirement for regular, five-yearly electrical safety checks in the private rented sector (PRS) in Northern Ireland. These have now been in operation in Scotland since 2015 and are due to be implemented in both England and Wales.

We have found overwhelming support for the Department for Communities to introduce legislation for this measure and extending this essential protection to social housing tenants.

There is a clear need for legislative change in Northern Ireland, to protect people – and their homes- from electrical risk. But for this to succeed, we need joined-up thinking and political will.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ Mandatory five-yearly electrical safety checks in the PRS in Northern Ireland, carried out by registered electricians.
- ✓ The same measures for all social housing – to ensure all renters, regardless of tenure, are protected from electrical hazards.
- ✓ The option of free five-yearly electrical safety checks for all owner-occupied households with one person of pensionable age.
- ✓ The current fitness standard replaced with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which considers the safety of a dwelling in light of the particular characteristics of members of the household.
- ✓ Protections for older and disabled people in the PRS so they report electrical hazards to landlords without fear of eviction.



1. Derived from statistics provided in a FOI response from NFRS on 31 Jan 2019. The figures cover the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.
2. Derived from statistics provided by NFRS in October 2017. The figures cover the period 1 April 2012- 31 March 2017.

BETTER CONSUMER SAFETY PROTECTIONS

With the growth in online shopping, there are more opportunities for unsafe counterfeit, second-hand and substandard electrical products to enter our homes without proper regulation. Online platforms have become the place to advertise and trade in unsafe electrical products, with thousands of items being sold online on a daily basis.

Second-hand electrical goods are openly sold online, but they can be subject to a recall but sold without any information provided to consumers, especially since private sales of electrical goods are not subject to the same regulations.

WE WANT TO SEE:



- ✓ Regulation of online sales of electrical goods to prevent recalled, counterfeit and substandard electrical products from being sold.
- ✓ Regulation of private sales so they are included in Consumer Rights legislation.
- ✓ Online platforms taking proactive responsibility by policing their sites for illegal sales of electrical goods, i.e. preventing recalled products and obviously unsafe products from being uploaded.
- ✓ Properly funded enforcement at ports and airports to target and prevent unsafe electrical goods from being sold.

SAFER PRODUCTS

The recall of electrical products is generally very poor with a response rate of only around 10 to 20 per cent³. Faulty recalled appliances are responsible for significant numbers of domestic fires and a number of tragic fatalities.

The UK's complex and self-regulated product recall system has left many unsafe products in people's homes, threatening lives and property. Manufacturers are not currently incentivised to take swift, appropriate action to counter potential danger.

The UK Government's Office for Product Safety and Standards needs to work proactively with the Northern Ireland Executive and other public bodies to ensure consumers are protected from these risks.

WE WANT TO SEE:



- ✓ No recalled electrical products sold or re-sold on online retail platforms.
- ✓ Government collect, review and publish product recall information, so that consumers have a one-place trusted authority to consult.
- ✓ Mandatory registration of electrical goods at the point of sale.

3. <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/1259/product-recall-report-2014.pdf>

